

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

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INFO SECDEF WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 0661

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, KS, US

SUBJECT: POSITIVE HIGH LEVEL REACTION TO INAUGURAL ADDRESS

SUMMARY: INFLUENTIAL GOVERNMENT FIGURES PRAISE OF
INAUGURAL COULD FORESHADOW A MOVE TOWARD MORE LENIENCY
IN HUMAN RIGHT. END SUMMARY.

1. APART FROM EXTENSIVE AND RELATIVELY FREE PRESS
REPORTING AND TEMPERED EDITORIALS ON PRESIDENT'S
INAUGURAL ADDRESS, WE HAVE BEEN STRUCK IN PAST FEW DAYS
BY HIGH LEVEL OF INDIVIDUAL TOP-LEVEL KOREAN INTEREST AND
BY THE VERY POSITIVE COMMENT OF THESE PEOPLE. DEPUTY PRIME
MINISTER NAM TOK-U AND FOREIGN MINISTER HAVE BOTH COMMENTED
VERY FAVORABLY TO AMBASSADOR ON SPEECH, INDICATING IN COURSE
REMARKS FULL AWARENESS OF EMPHASIS PUT ON HUMAN RIGHTS.
IN HIGHLY EMOTIONAL VEIN NORMALLY SELF-CONTAINED FINANCE
MINISTER KIM YONG-HWAN TOLD ECONCOUNS HE STAYED UP LATE
INTO NIGHT TO VIEW INAUGURAL PROCEEDINGS ON AFKN HE
WAS ENORMOUSLY IMPRESSED BY SPEECH AND WAS EVEN MORE STRUCK
BY PRESIDENT'S WALK DOWN PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE; THIS WAS
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"AMERICA RECOVERING ITS GREATNESS," HE SAID. MANY OTHER
INFLUENTIAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS HAVE COMMENTED TO US IN
SIMILAR POSITIVE VEIN AND NONE HAVE FAILED TO CATCH
POINTS ON MORALITY. THEIR REMARKS INDICATE BROADER SUPPORT
FOR INCREASED HUMAN RIGHTS THAN WE HAVE HEARD FOR SOME
TIME.

2. OPPOSITION EXPECTEDLY IS DELIGHTED WITH ADDRESS.

NCCCK SEC GEN KIM KWON-SUK SAID THAT IT WAS EXCELLENT AND THAT ITS STRENGTH IN HUMAN RIGHTS AREA EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS. ALL OPPOSITION FIGURES WE HAVE TALKED TO HAVE OBVIOUSLY TAKEN HEART FROM INAUGURAL. JOURNALISTS AND OTHERS HAVE COMMENTED NOHAT IT LIABLE TO STRENGTHEN STUDENT IMPULSE TO DEMONSTRATE ANTI-GOVERNMENT VIEWS MORE ACTIVELY IN SPRING, TALK OF WHICH HAS RECENTLY BEEN ON RISE.

3. COMMENT: POSITIVE REMARKS OF TOP-LEVEL FIGURES PLUS EXTENSIVENESS AND RELATIVE FREEDOM OF TV AND NEWS COVERAGE OF INAUGURAL COULD FORESHADOW GOVERNMENT MOVE IN DIRECTION OF GREATER LENIENCY ON HUMAN RIGHTS. THIS WOULD BE IN LINE WITH MINOR RECENT MOVES IN THIS DIRECTION REPORTED SEOUL 0381. FRANKLY, WE HAVE LITTLE TO GO ON OTHER THAN SCATTERED RUMORS. BUT NDP LEADER LI CHOL-SUNG DID SAY JANUARY 25 HE HAD INTIMATIONS OF A RELAXATION AND WE FIND IT INTERESTING THAT TWO SEPARATE SOURCES, KIM KWON-KUK AND A JAPANESE JOURNALIST, BOTH TOLD US IN LAST WEEK THAT ROKG EXPECTED TO ANNOUNCE SOME KIND OF AMNESTY FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS JANUARY 26. ON OTHER HAND, ALL THIS MAY BE JUST WISHFUL THINKING.
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